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subsidiary of Rome”***

The richness and misery of the Church in Germany

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the primitive Church*

Cardinal Walter Kasper in 2012

The rebirth of German Catholicism in the 19th century following the Napoleonic Wars was one of the most spectacular phenomena accompanying what many historians refer to as the “re-confessionalization” (Fr. Blaschke). The particular dynamism of this rebirth took place in the second half of that century. After the Spring of Nations, in still divided Germany, a rapid growth in the number of religious communities occurs, pilgrimages flourish, a network of Catholic worker associations emerges, Catholic Social Doctrine begins to take shape (Abp. Kettler), which would later become an important inspiration for the universal social teaching of the Catholic Church.

The power of the German Church was felt painfully by Bismarck. His unleashing of the anti-Catholic Kulturkampf, in collusion with the German liberals, was a failure for the “Iron Chancellor.” During the next decade, he had to withdraw the anti-Church laws. Bismarck found a worthy opponent in the person of the leader of the Centre Party, Ludwig Windthorst, who went undefeated in many parliamentary debates.

The turn of the 19th and 20th centuries was the apogee of Catholic power in the German Reich (I leave aside the situation of Catholicism in the Prussian sector, for example in Alsace), Catholic associations, Catholic press, spiritual life (measured by the attendance at services, forms of piety such as pilgrimages, processions). Although one must remember that in the Second Reich, just like in Prussia, Catholicism was a religion of the minority, encompassing about a third of the total population.

Probably the first serious symptom of disquiet in this bright picture was the systematic evolution of Catholic Centre (as a political formation) towards German nationalism, if not outright chauvinism. This process was complete in the early years of the 20th century, when German Catholic politicians, without blenching, supported the anti-Polish laws enacted by Berlin, led by the act of 1908 on the forcible expropriation of Polish landed property. It was a far cry from the statements made by Windthorst, warning about lending support to the Prussian policy of denationalization as contrary to Divine and natural law.

Apart from this, the beginning of the 20th century saw the rise of the crisis of Modernism in the whole Church. It began to take shape in Germany, too. The history of Modernism “in hiding,” after the intervention of St. Pius X (the encyclical “Pascendi” and the Anti-Modernist Oath), is a topic still awaiting a comprehensive historical treatment. However, its first manifestations in Germany can be traced back to the period between the two World Wars.

Now it should be strongly emphasized that the source of the current crisis of German Catholicism is to be found in the crisis of philosophy and theology. This is a very broad issue, which goes far beyond the scope of this text and which can be traced back as far as the Reformation of the 16th century.

German Catholicism in the 19th century constituted a crucial element of the Universal Church. Proof of this can be found in its unrelenting stance during the Kulturkampf. German Catholicism in the 20th century played a similar role in the life of the whole Church. Its most profound example can be recognized in what many authors call the “flowing of the Rhine into the Tiber.” One hundred years earlier, German Catholicism was one of the pillars of the Church in Europe, which was engaged in a war with several different Kulturkamfs, i.e. different forms of forced secularization. In the 1960s, it had already become the mainstay of the “open Church,” which

emanation today is the phenomenon that the media refer to as the “Church of Francis.”

Without taking into account the role of German prelates during the course of Vatican II (beginning with the “hostile takeover” of its proceedings along with the French bishops from the start) and the role of German theologians such as Karl Rahner (and his students) in espousing the so-called “New Theology” after the conclusion of the Council, it is difficult to assess the significance of German Catholicism in the life of the contemporary Catholic Church. During his second apostolic visit to the Federal Republic of Germany in 1987, St. John Paul II drew attention to the delusion of human hopes based on human self-sufficiency in the political and social spheres and concluded: “And the Church? In the recent years, there has been much discussion about the renewal of religious life and much more has been done in this area than before, but yet the churches are becoming more deserted, religious engagement and the Christian witness of faith is waning.” (Mass in Essen, 2/05/1987)¹

The place where these words were spoken by the Successor of St. Peter is of great significance, since the Pope was clearly presenting a concise description of the crisis, which is consuming German Catholicism.

In our current day, we have seen the election of two popes from Germany. One, Benedict XVI, in the sense of nationality and intellectual formation. The other, Francis, in the sense of receiving intellectual formation in Germany. Within the circle of his most trusted advisors, whether it pertains to the reform of the Roman Curia or the elaboration of a new “pastoral sensitivity” in relation to divorced people, there are German prelates (cardinals Walter Kasper and Reinhard Marx).

In particular, the status of the latter seems to be extremely powerful and influential during the present pontificate. In 1993, Walter Kasper as the

¹ “Osservatore Romano” [Polish edition], 1987, number 7, 30.

bishop of the Rottenburg-Stuttgart diocese, along with the archbishop of Mainz and the bishop of Freiburg, co-signed a letter in which the said prelates de facto renounced fidelity to the Church's teaching on the indissolubility of marriage. The letter contained a call – of course dictated by “pastoral care” – to admit divorced people who re-married under civil law and who have made a “serious examination of conscience” to Holy Communion.

WHO NEEDS THE NICENE CREED TODAY?

This de facto schism in relation to the traditional doctrine of the Church should be treated in this instance not as a cause, but as a result – a result of a specific (to put it euphemistically) theological and philosophical outlook of the future cardinal. It is worthwhile to take a closer look at one of the most important theological works of W. Kasper entitled “Jesus Christ” (Polish edition 1983).

One who would expect to strengthen his faith by reading this book will be sorely disappointed. The biography of the Redeemer written by Walter Kasper does not in the least begin with the Incarnation and Nativity in Bethlehem, but with the commencement of the public teaching of Christ. The person of Our Lady in the life of Christ is totally marginalized in this approach. The whole book is written in a typical of German theology obscure jargon.

This “introspective melancholy” and “spiritually pouted grumpiness” (G. K. Chesterton) revealed in the German “Methode und Fragestellung” (Eng. method and research question) can also be treated as a smokescreen of sorts, aimed at fumigating the essential issues. Reading through the pages of W. Kasper's book, one comes across such excerpts: “This overview of the Tradition indicates that the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed in Jesus as the True God did not solve everything at all. For theology, this Creed is still not a fully clarified task. There continues to exist a need to subject the ideas

and concepts about God and His immutability to an essential Christological reinterpretation so that once again the biblical understanding of God as the God of history can be highlighted.”²

If not the Tradition of the Church, which “cannot solve everything” in the sphere of Christology, than what interpretative model should be utilized in this respect? The future cardinal points to “brilliant achievements” of Hegel in the sphere of Christology.³ He immediately adds: “However, Hegel’s critics should not forget that his philosophy (similar elements can be seen for Fichte and Schelling) gives arguments to the theologian that help him do justice – better than the metaphysically oriented tradition – to the Christ-event and understand God not as a philosophical abstraction, but specifically as the God and the Father of Jesus Christ.”⁴

The amount of praise for Hegel in W. Kasper’s book and the entire German idealistic philosophy is equal to the amount of critical remarks with regard to the “scholastic speculation” or the “metaphysically oriented tradition” (or, in other words, the traditional Catholic theology and philosophy). The destructive legacy of the German idealistic philosophy beginning with Kant and, through him, Luther is too wide a topic to discuss in detail here.⁵ Suffice it to say that without Hegelianism, Marxism along with its later mutations (Frankfurt School, New Left) would never have developed.

The second source of inspiration for Kasperesque Christology is the aforementioned German theologian Karl Rahner. “The undisputed contribution of Karl Rahner is that he showed how on the basis of modern assumptions (not circumstances!), Christology could be practiced in a new way. In this way, he made it possible for many people to access the Christian

² W. Kasper, *Jesus Christus*, trans. by B. Bialecki (Warsaw 1983), 185.

³ *Ibidem*, 187.

⁴ *Ibidem*, 188.

⁵ For a comprehensive study on this subject see T. Guz, *Zum Gottesbegriff G.W.F. Hegels im Rückblick auf das Gottesverständnis Martin Luthers. Eine metaphysische Untersuchung*, Lublin 2014 (especially p. 152-245)

faith and helped Catholic theology come into contact with the contemporary hermeneutical debate. K. Rahner addresses the problem of demythologization as one that is justified, starting with a harsh criticism of the commonly found secretly mythological comprehension of the faith in Christ.”⁶

According to W. Kasper, a noteworthy proposition of “Christological neointerpretation” which, judging on the previously cited opinion of the author, should replace the Credo of the Church is the Rahnerian “bottom-up Christology.” It is defined in a typical of German theology and philosophy way that is hard to grasp with the mental faculties: “Man in every categorical act of cognition and freedom experiences himself as a being, going beyond the “I” and beyond every categorical subject, becomes reliant on some ineffable mystery [...] this mystery being an asymptotic carrier of an infinite movement, a movement which always remains in what is finite – this mystery not only totes and penetrates existence, but grants itself to man as the fulfillment of his humanity.”⁷

At times the author quite clearly demonstrates his modernist vision, even denying the traditional doctrine of the Church about the revealed Divine dignity of Christ in the Gospels. Walter Kasper has read nothing of sorts in Holy Writ and, in accordance with canon of Modernism, states that the Divinity of Jesus Christ is not a fact, but an expression of the primitive Church: “Only in relatively few and rather subsequent passages of the New Testament, Jesus is named God. In the main Pauline, Jesus is adjudicated as God at most in two, in addition very disputed, places (Romans 9:5; Corinthians 1:2) on which one can’t surely build a holistic Christology. That is why Christology must be derived from sources and from the heart of the New Testament faith in Christ, from the Paschal formula of faith that Jesus is Kyrios.”⁸

⁶ W. Kasper, *op. cit.*, 44.

⁷ *Ibidem*, 45.

⁸ *Ibidem*, 171-172.

IT IS NOT ABOUT CHANGES IN THE CHURCH, IT IS ABOUT CHANGING THE CHURCH

The rejection of the Nicene Creed, which “cannot solve everything” is to be the beginning of an overall change not so much in the Church, but an overall change of the Church. In June 2012, in his talk in Mannheim during the annual Catholic Congress (Katholikentag), Cardinal Walter Kasper observed that “the time of the folk Church has come to an end [“Volkskirche” in the sense of the “mass” Church, ann. by G. K.] and currently we are at the beginning of an epochal turn.” At the same time, the German Cardinal expressed the conviction that “in ten, twenty years the Church will be completely different from what it is today and will resemble more the primitive Church.”⁹ Cardinal Kasper considers the inaugurated in October 2014 extraordinary session of the Synod of bishops dedicated to the family to be an instrument of this far-reaching, if not outright revolutionary, change. In his interview given to the liberal weekly “Die Zeit” on 21 October 2014, when asked whether there was a talk of a revolution in the Church during the Synod, he replied: “I call this a change in the paradigm. We no longer emerge from an abstract doctrine and we don’t enforce it on the people, but we steer them towards a good and happy life.”

In the above cited statement of Cardinal Kasper, one can observe two techniques of manipulation (let’s call a spade a spade). In the first place, the usage of euphemisms. He avoids the word “revolution” and applies “a change in the paradigm” instead. This is accompanied by another semantic manipulation, often used by the German hierarchs interested in breaking with the Church Tradition, that is the constant reference to “pastoral care.” Cardinal Kasper spoke of this in the mentioned interview. He repeated his words in another place, saying: “The assertion that we will now admit the divorced and remarried to Holy Communion? This is not a dogma. It is the application of a dogma in concrete, pastoral praxis. This can be changed.”

⁹ All of the cited statements of the Cardinal, unless otherwise specified, are taken from www.cardinalrating.com (accessed on 5-11/02/2015)

At this point, the words of the retired archbishop of Cologne, Cardinal Joachim Meissner, on the subject of “pastoral care” are worth bringing back. In an article published on 24/10/2014 in “Die Tagespost” referring to this line of argumentation, he stated: “I hope that no-one will forget that the faith is a living doctrine! That is why it is something inconceivable to change [pastoral] practice, but not a doctrine. ‘The Word was made flesh dwelt among us’ (John 1:14). This is the core of the Christian faith. The Word is not only flesh (life) and not only a word (doctrine). Both of these inseparable elements (a life and a doctrine, ann. by G. K.) constitute the embodied Word of the Christian faith.”

THE CARDINAL’S “MASKIROVKA”

Characteristically, Cardinal Kasper seems to be applying a maneuver, which specialists of propaganda montage refer to as “maskirovka.” In other words, in some of his interviews, the Cardinal calms the listeners and readers that “nothing is happening.” In other places, he does not shun expressing his conviction that a radical change is awaiting the Church.

In an interview with Vatican Radio in March 2014, the German Cardinal reassuringly observed that “the Church does not have to change its norms, but interpret them in such a way that they are applicable in a contemporary life.” He went even further in reassuring Polish readers (in this case, the maskirovka was all the more needed if one considers the role played by the president of the Polish Episcopate in the Synod) in December 2014 in his interview with “Rzeczpospolita.” The crux of the message was: “Nothing happened, Poles, nothing happened.” The question of whether during the Synod some bishops contested (which was a fact) the principle of marriage indissolubility as a sacrament, the German cardinal addressed as follows: “If that were the case, then indeed we would be faced with a scandal. But a false alarm was raised. I did not hear any bishop undermining the words of Jesus:

‘What therefore **God** hath **joined together**, let **not man** put asunder.’ This precept of the Lord is fundamental and irrefutable, both for the Church and every Christian.”

The “calm down” tactic was also utilized in reference to another issue raised in a different question and having to do with the resounding voices at the Synod that demanded liberalization of the Church’s position with regard to so-called same-sex unions. Also in this case, Cardinal Kasper assured: “Assertions of a sexual revolution during the Synod are absurd. In the final document, the bishops clearly stated that same-sex unions cannot be equated with marriage and the family, because the acts which take place within them are not in accordance with the Divine order of creation.”

However, after “A” comes “B” or, in other words, a great “BUT”. Thus – says Cardinal Kasper in the interview with “Rzeczpospolita” – “The Church is faithful to these words of Jesus and cannot approve the entrance of one spouse into another union while the other spouse is still alive.” BUT “Christians who do this still remain members of the Church, and it must especially care for them and stay close to them.” A battering ram used to destroy the traditional teaching of the Church, which is nothing else but the repetition of the words of the Savior, is Divine Mercy: “Many people emphasize that God is infinitely merciful and does not allow anyone who turns to Him to fall. God is merciful like in the parable told by Jesus about the father who accepts the prodigal son and returns all his filial rights to him. The same mercy should also characterize the Church.” The conclusion is that “during the Synod, there was a consideration of the possibility” (reassurance) of “individual Christians” (reassurance), “who feel a deep desire for the sacramental life after an in-depth study of their situation” (blurring alias gibberish, after all what do “deep desire” and “in-depth study” mean?), “to be admitted by the bishop to the sacrament of penance in order to receive absolution and present themselves for Holy Communion” (finally some clarity: a wide-open door to sacrilegious Communion).

This is, more or less, the script for the destruction of the Catholic doctrine on the sacramental character of the marriage union and it is being prepared by Cardinal Kasper and other German cardinals, genuine “agents of the Revolution” (J. Bartyzel). Catholic marriage after these changes planned for “individual Christians” will resemble the veneration of the Blessed Sacrament after Communion in the hand was introduced “in certain instances.” It will resemble the sacrament of penance after leveling (here the German Church was a pioneer, despite many heartfelt appeals from St. John Paul II) general confession at the beginning of Mass with sacramental confession. Knowing how this eventually turned out in German churches (in those that have not been converted into bars and restaurants – see below), the pre-saged by Cardinal Kasper “admission to the sacrament of penance” will be limited to the general confession.

Cardinal Kasper’s positions are strongly supported by the German episcopate, led by Cardinal Reinhard Marx, the metropolitan archbishop of Munich and Frising and the president of the German Bishops Conference, as well as by Cardinal Rainer Maria Woelke, the metropolitan archbishop of Cologne.

Their public statements additionally illustrate what lies behind the strongly emphasized “pastoral care” in the case of Communion for the divorced, i.e. “a change in the paradigm” in a decisively anthropocentric direction, in the sense of constant watering down the Gospel teaching. The German cardinals seem to believe that the best way to succeed in life (that is, fulfill the Gospel precepts) is to constantly lower the bar. Then it will be certain that no-one will “precipitate” (a divergence between individual lives and the Gospel). In this approach, the Gospel is a nice proposition for nice people. The words of Christ, in which He conditioned “following Him” on “denying oneself” and “taking up your cross” (Mark 8:34), vanish. Gone are also the words of his Vicar in the years 1978-2005: “Always **demand** from **yourself**, even if others don’t **demand** from you.” In his inter-

view given in late October 2014, Cardinal Marx stated instead: “The Christian does not live arbitrarily. Thus there exists a Church morality. It does not, however, occupy a primary place. The Gospel is a liberating novelty and experience: Heaven is open. I am ultimately and forever loved! This is obscured if Christianity is reduced to a system of ideas about morality and prohibitions. This would not be something positive, because in this way one would not be able to grasp the essence of Christianity.”

It follows that this defect can be attributed to the Apostle of the Nations, St. Paul, who in his harsh words singled out those who “will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven” and even forbade “sitting down to a meal together” (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:11, Galatians 5:19-21, Ephesians 5:12, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7, Philippians 3:18-21), including those towards whom the German cardinals especially want to display “particular sensitivity and pastoral care” (e.g. Sodomites).

THE GOSPEL WITHOUT THE CROSS. MERCY WITHOUT CONVERSION

In the approach of the German cardinals, one cannot equate the Gospel with any sort of call to heroic acts, including those in the sense of everyday heroism of living in accordance with the Ten Commandments. In December 2013, the archbishop of Cologne, Cardinal Woelke, characterized the tasks at hand in light of the upcoming Synod on the family in the following way: “I assume that during the Synod in October 2014, on the issue that has moved us, the German bishops for the last twenty years (Communion for the divorced – ann. by G. K.), a conclusion will be reached that will take into account two things: ‘yes’ for the indissolubility of marriage, but also a solution for those affected [divorced] derived from the Gospel.” In other words, “yes”, “but” . . .

Cardinal Kasper is more precise in formulating his opinion. In the aforementioned interview with “Die Zeit,” he referred to his earlier statement cited by the interviewer that “the Gospel is not a penal code” and elab-

borated on this in the following way: “The Gospel is a ‘yes’ directed towards a man. God says ‘yes’ to us. God wants the best for us. And it is precisely here where the Synod makes a proper correction in the orientation. We want to emphasize more what is positive in a person. No person is simply evil, but the good should grow in him.”

This is a very characteristic method of Cardinal Kasper: confusing a true statement (latter sentence) with one that is not quite true and one that is simply false (“a proper correction in the orientation” – a double falsehood: it is not about a correction, but a revolution, and secondly, it suggests that up to now the Church has been saying “no” to a man).

During his Spring 2014 visit to the United States, Cardinal Kasper talked about the upcoming Synod on many occasions during his interviews. He did so, among others, in radio interviews (for New York Public Radio and the Brian Lehrer Show) and in an extensive interview (7/05/2014) for the “Commonweal” magazine, a flagship publication of so-called Catholic liberalism (the American equivalent of “Tygodnik Powszechny”). The German cardinal spoke there in a completely different fashion when compared with his interview for “Rzeczpospolita.”

He decisively rejected recommendations given (including those by St. John Paul II) to divorced Catholics that prescribe sexual abstinence in new “civil” unions, which – after fulfilling this obligation – makes Holy Communion for the divorced and re-married possible. In Cardinal Kasper’s vision, there is no place for such a thing as “abstinence” or “demanding of oneself.” The German cardinal seems to snort at this during the interview: “Live like a brother and a sister? Of course, I have great appreciation for those who live this way. But this is a heroic act and heroism is not for a common Christian.”

So much for the prevalent belief of generations of Christians that the Gospel is a call to heroism, to a heroic at times cooperation with the Grace of God. Indeed, it is Christ Himself who calls us to this heroism, demanding

that we follow Him on the Way of the Cross. We are called to this heroism by His Apostles, when they write that “faith without works is dead” (St. James). This perspective is totally rejected by Cardinal Kasper and his supporters in the German episcopate. Cardinal Kasper likes to invoke the Gospel parable of the prodigal son and the merciful father. But this a completely new interpretation, in which the prodigal son does not make a radical change in his behavior and returns (converts) to the Father. Before he was embraced in the arms of the loving Parent, there was a long, possibly even painful, journey of return. In the new approach, the prodigal son promptly returns, throws himself into the arms of the Father and then returns to his old habits.

Opponents of the radical change in the Church are called “rigorists.” This verbal manipulation is very much preferred by Cardinal Kasper. While describing the current phase of the crisis in the Universal Church, initiated by the demand of the German Church for a far-reaching “reform” of the commandment “Do not commit adultery,” the German Cardinal refers to a false analogy from the second half of the 17th century, when among Catholic moral theologians a dispute arose between the so-called rigorists and “laxists.” The Jesuits were the ones most often accused of “laxism” (or “too lax”, excessively utilizing a casuistry approach to the consideration of sins during a confession).

This comparison is invalid, because both sides of the debate at the time held exactly the same position regarding the inviolability of the Decalogue. For both sides, adultery was adultery. Even to the most proficient in casuistry, it would have never occurred to them to seek such leeway when dealing with a sin, as it is in the case of today’s German cardinals. It would have never occurred to them to separate mercy from conversion and penance, as well as the Gospel from the cross.

The most likely purpose of this analogy, which Cardinal Kasper often refers to, is to place his opponents in a doubly bad light. Firstly, for a common listener, the word “rigorism” has negative connotations. Secondly, for

those more knowledgeable who are aware that the jansenist heresy often hid behind the words and statements of the 17th century “rigorists” and labeling the current opponents of German heresy in the Church as “rigorists” carries the following message: they are most likely heretics. At best, they are “clerical Pharisees.”¹⁰

Cardinal Kasper seeks allies for his agenda even among those who cannot protest against being placed in such a position (although their writings do!), namely the Doctors of the Church. All of a sudden, it turns out that among the proponents of the changes proposed by the German Cardinal are St. Alphonsus Ligouri and even the Angelic Doctor. In an attempt to convince readers of “Commonweal”, Cardinal Kasper stated: “Alphons Ligouri was initially a rigorist. Later he worked among the common folk near Naples and noticed that [rigorism] it is not possible. He was a confessor. He later developed the system of equiprobablism, where there are arguments for and against and as relates to these issues [which exactly? – ann. by G. K.], one or the other can be chosen. This suits me very well. And of course, Alphons Ligouri is the patron of moral theology. We are not in bad company if we rely on him. Thomas Aquinas wrote on the virtue of prudence, which does not negate the universal norm, but it must be applied in a specific, often complicated situation. Thus, I think that there are arguments from the Tradition.”

Therefore, the conclusion is: contemporary “rigorists” are “clerical Pharisees,” laced with heresy and most certainly at odds with the Tradition, with such giants of Catholic thought as St. Thomas Aquinas.

¹⁰ Statement by Cardinal Kasper made during his interview with Vatican Radio in March 2014.

“RIGORISM”, A CONSPIRACY THEORY AND FINALLY TERRORISM

Generally speaking, as the German cardinals would, one must avoid making categorical judgments. Cardinal Marx claims: “I do not have a problem with the tradition. But we observe a tendency in which young people decisively insist on their position. Black and white populism is on the rise in Europe. And this is the beginning, possibly, of terrorism [...] The tendency to belittle the complexity of the world in order to give simple black and white answers is growing and I think this is very dangerous.” The syllogism is thus very simple: if you are perplexed by the attempts of the German hierarchs to implement a revolutionary change in the Church, you are on the straight road to terrorism and you live in a world of conspiracy theories.

Already in February 2012 in an interview with liberal “Die Zeit”, Cardinal Marx addressing the question of whether he browses “radical, Catholic websites”, he answered: “I don’t read them at all. [...] The constant floating around of the question, ‘Who is a better Catholic?’ leads only to conspiracy theories and indicating the culpable.”¹¹ Of course, accusing someone of leaning towards terrorism is not a sign of such unworthy conduct.

Although generations of Catholics heard the Gospel precept: “ But **let your language be, Yes, yes; or No, no;** for whatever is beyond these proceedeth from evil”, now there is to be a “change in the paradigm” in evaluating the Gospel, which from a guide on how to enter the Kingdom of God through the narrow gate is to be transformed by the work of the revolutionaries into a guide in the category of “100 ways to achieve a hunky-dory life.”

As Cardinal Marx explains, one does not need to exaggerate with evangelization and in any event it is best to avoid the black and white colors, although the Gospel does cite the words of the Savior dispatching his Apostles before his Ascension with the assurance that “**he that believeth not shall**

¹¹ Interview with Cardinal Marx for “Die Zeit” 3/02/2012 www.zeit.de/2012/06/interview-Marx/komplettanischt [accessed on: 15/01/2015]

be condemned” (Mark 16:16). The president of the German Bishops Conference, on the other hand, states in the interview with rp-online (October 2014) that evangelization “does not in any way signify a ‘Reconquest’ mentality, the recovery of lost ground. This would be looking backwards. We have to have a positive attitude towards contemporary reality and that is why we cannot lament and say: the great history of Christianity is behind us, ahead of us only hardship, darkness and everything that is negative. This view is alien to me.”

So what are we to do with the Gospel parable of the shepherd searching for that one lost sheep? Is this not precisely the heroic, persistent “recovery of lost ground”? What are we to make of the announcements by Our Lord directed to his Apostles of all times that they will be persecuted and will suffer? In the present forms of “paradigms” imposed by the German revolutionaries, such words seem to resemble the unacceptable “mentality of ‘Reconquest.’”

It is equally unacceptable to treat the Church as the infallible Bride of Christ. In the Credo we profess to believe in “one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church.” We know that since the time of the first Pentecost, the Holy Spirit dwells in the Church. From Cardinal Kasper’s analysis, however, we know that the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed has become much too obsolete. Ecclesiology now has to look different, preferably according to the principle of “Who am I to judge?”

In February 2012, Cardinal Marx in the above cited interview with “Die Zeit” stated: “The Church that knows everything is not easy to accept for people, me included. We do not administer God but the Mysteries of God, says St. Paul. This means that we only know temporary answers. In the end, there is God, who is greater than anything that people think and are able to say.”

Just as in the cited statements of Cardinal Kasper, we can observe here the same method of formulating opinions. The true statement (the last sentence) is mixed with the completely false one (“temporary answers” of the Church – even after Pentecost?). **“The new phase in the reception of the Council”**

The German cardinals treat their diversion from the traditional Church doctrine regarding marriage as a next phase of the “conciliar reforms”, the completion of the “work of Church renewal.” A truly significant statement was made in this regard by Cardinal Kasper in the cited interview with “Commonweal,” when he expressed his opinion that Pope Francis “is opening a new phase in the reception of the Council.”

This “new phase” is to be based on the revision of the past, all too rigorous rulings of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. These far-reaching changes are foretold by Cardinal Kasper with help of references to mercy: “He [Francis] does not like people in the Church who condemn others. When it comes to the criticism of some theologians’ Doctrine of the Faith by the Congregation, it has not always occurred properly. This is obvious and here we must change the measures we have thus far utilized.”

It is worthwhile to note that the history of the much praised by Cardinal Kasper (a thing typical of all progressives) primitive Church is full of anathemas against heresies (montanism, docetism, gnosticism etc.). Since its beginning, the Church has been the Church Militant, battling on two fronts: on one in the Roman arenas shedding blood for Christ and on the other, more important front, looking after the purity of the doctrine with the help of merciful anathemas.

But now we are dealing with a new phase of *aggiornamento*. As stated by Cardinal Marx in his interview with the Jesuit magazine “America”: “This is an issue of *aggiornamento*, that is, the point to say that in such a way so that people will be able to comprehend it and adapt science to the Gospel,

theology, to find the proper sense of Jesus's words, to understand the tradition of the Church, theology etc. There is much to be done in this respect." Cardinal Kasper was even more succinct: "If there is a gap between what people do and what the Church teaches, this does not serve the veracity of the Church. This has to change."

It is hard at this point not to recall the excerpt of the Gospel of St. John (very much disliked by the German scribes) describing the turning away of many followers from Christ after His words about the institution of the Eucharist. A great chasm was revealed between the "hard saying" of the Savior about the Bread of Life, the necessity to "eat the flesh of the Son of Man" and the expectations of the audience, including many apostles. The Divine Master did not "adapt" the truth to the expectations of his many followers, but gave witness to it. Even at the price of many leaving Him. Peter, however, remained with the Eleven (John 6:48-69).

The German Cardinals make no secret of their great hopes associated with the pontificate of Pope Francis, who see in his person a chance to bring about the "change in the paradigm" in the Church. Cardinal Kasper spoke openly about this in the cited statements given to "Commonweal": "Pope Francis cannot do everything on his own, he thinks in terms of a process. He wants to initiate this process which will be continued after him. I think he will have the opportunity to nominate 40% of the cardinals and they will be the ones who will choose a new pope. In this way, he [Francis] wants to condition a new conclave". Just in time, the German cardinal remembered Someone important and incidentally added: "Of course, the Holy Spirit is also present."

The ongoing Synod on the family, whose first extraordinary session took place in October 2014, is seen by the German cardinals as knocking down the first domino. In the interview with "Die Zeit," to the question of whether he was disappointed that a qualified majority could not be found in regard to a few issues, Cardinal Kasper answered in the following way:

“I would like to have had those few more votes as well. But only for 3 out of 62 points we did not receive the two-thirds majority. Also regarding the disputed points, there exists a relatively strong majority. Thus that was not a catastrophe at all. I’m hoping that the next year we will go further.”

The question of what he has to say to divorced people living in new unions, who were hoping for a “solution regarding the sacraments” and now are disappointed with the way the Synod played it out, Cardinal Kasper answered, assuring these people soothingly (read: appallingly): “No-one anticipated a decision during this first session of the Synod. The phase of the Synod which now has come to a close is not the last word. We are active. We treat our commitment seriously and I hope that the next year at the Synod’s conclusion we will get the broad majority.”

The second session of the Synod is thus perceived as overtime and the result can only be one. Even in a toned down interview granted to “Rzeczpospolita,” Cardinal Kasper said: “If we did not seek to address the emerging issues, which are burning pastoral problems, we could all together do away with calling the Synod.” N.B. Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, who is the secretary general of the Synod, stated at the end of January 2015 that “if the goal of the Synod was to repeat the established teaching of the Church and Church discipline, then the Synod would be meaningless.”

It is worth comparing these statements with the position of the retired archbishop of Cologne, Cardinal Joachim Meissner, who in the cited article for “Die Tagespost” (24/10/2014) observed: “St. John Paul II in an unexplained manner disappeared from the bodies preparing the Synod. How can this be explained? On April 27th 2014, Pope John Paul II was canonized in Rome. One hundred thousand pilgrims, most of who being his countrymen, attended. However, for the organizers of the Synod, that did not seem to matter. Vox populi, vox Dei. The voice of the People of God was not wanted and that is why it was not heard.”

In these words, Cardinal Meissner, despite holding positions completely different from those of Cardinal Kasper, also deems the Synod which began in October 2014 to be the beginning of a radical rupture with the traditional doctrine of the Church.

The “new phase of the reception of the Council” signifies a need to redefine key concepts (“to make changes in the paradigm”), such as the family and marriage. In the interview with “Rzeczpospolita,” Cardinal Kasper was extremely reticent in this respect (maskirovka). However, he spoke very plainly on the topic in the interview with “Commonweal,” in which he opened the door to a departure from the Catholic understanding of marriage indissolubility as a sacrament.

After distancing himself from suspicions that he does not support Holy Communion for divorced Catholics living in new “civil” marriages and treating the original sacramental marriage as indissoluble, Cardinal Kasper said: “The second marriage [note the word “marriage” – ann. by G. K.] is obviously not a marriage in the Christian sense of the word. And I would be against celebrating it in a church. But there are elements of marriage in it. I would compare this to how the Catholic Church views other churches. The Catholic Church is the real Church of Christ, but there are other churches which also possess certain elements of the real Church and which we recognize. In the same manner, we can say that the authentic marriage is the sacramental marriage. Any other is not a marriage in the proper sense, but it possesses its elements: the spouses take care of each other, they are bound only to one another, there is an intention of permanence (of the union), they care for the children and lead a life of prayer etc.”

It is worth adding that a similar opinion was presented during the Synod in October 2014 by Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, the metropolitan archbishop of Vienna, the main ally of his German brothers in implementing the “change in the paradigm.” It is no coincidence that when referring to the sacramental marriage, he uses such a term as a “complete marriage”

(Vollehe). “Civil unions” do not constitute a “complete marriage,” but they contain some of its elements.

Cardinal Marx went even further in “changing the paradigm,” when asked in February in an interview with “Tageszeitung” what the family meant to him, he replied: “The ideal vision that the family is comprised of a man and a woman who decide to live together and with their children remain all intact. However, one cannot deny the moral quality [Ger. “eine sittliche Qualität”] of other forms of life in which people accept permanent responsibility for one another.”

In this way, we arrive at the question of so-called same-sex unions, which Cardinal Kasper denied to affirm in the mentioned interview with “Rzeczpospolita.” But in the interview with “Die Zeit,” he was not able to give a clear answer to the straightforward question of whether homosexuality is a sin: “Homosexual orientation in and of itself is of course not a sin. The moral evaluation can only refer to the practical side. I do not want to judge here the subjective conscience of individual people. We should always judge ourselves first.”

When it comes to homosexuals and so-called same-sex unions, the German cardinals usually reach for the same tactic applied to the question of maintaining the sacramental character of marriage: “in general we say ‘yes,’ but. . .” (or like Lech Wałęsa used to say: “We are for and even against”).

In “Rzeczpospolita,” Cardinal Kasper deprecates support for “same-sex unions,” reiterating that “they cannot be equated with marriage and the family”. However, a “but” follows shortly.

In “Rzeczpospolita” Cardinal Kasper deprecates support for “same-sex unions,” reiterating that “they cannot be equated with marriage and the family.” However, a “but” follows shortly: The problem of divorce and civil re-marriage, among people with a homosexual orientation as well, exists today in almost every family and every parish. We cannot close our eyes to reality.”

It is worth noting in the margin that by equating the scale of the above mentioned sexual deviation with the phenomenon of divorce, the German Cardinal places himself in the mainstream of homopropaganda, which for years has been claiming that homosexuality is not something marginal, but has a social dimension.

HOMOSEXUAL COUPLES AS EXAMPLES OF LOVE AND FIDELITY

Cardinal Woelki is also “for and even against.” In one of his interviews given in April 2013, the Archbishop of Cologne made his affirmation clear: “For us, the Catholic Church, marriage is clearly limited to the sacramental union of a man and a woman. And so, I will very decisively oppose the extension of the concepts of family and marriage.”

This affirmation, however, was accompanied by a series of words and gestures which sent a totally different message or – at best – one can treat them as typical “mixed signals.” Not long after receiving his cardinal’s hat (February 2012) from the hands of Benedict XVI, did Woelki (then still the Archbishop of Berlin) speak in May 2012 at the annual Congress of German Catholics (Katholikentag) and stated that: “When two homosexual persons take mutual responsibility for each other, their union is long-lasting and faithful, one should treat this union in the same manner as a union of heterosexual persons..” Generally speaking, the then Archbishop of Berlin believed that: “One who takes the Catechism seriously should not see in homosexual unions merely an offense against natural law.”

Woelki was the first German hierarch to initiate, starting in September 2011, regular meetings with the representatives of the Berlin LGBT groups. In the fall of 2012, the Berlin “Association Against Homophobia” awarded Cardinal Woelke the “Respektpreis” (Respect Award) given to people who lead the way when it comes to fighting “homophobia.” The Cardinal refused to accept the award because “for him as a Catholic, respect for all people

is something obvious” (an interview for German “Katolische Nachrichten-Agentur”).

But it is not only the current Archbishop of Cologne who deserves this award. The bishop of Munich is also working hard for this honor. In October 2014, Cardinal Marx stated during an interview: “Exclusion is not the language of the Church.” Only a union between a man and a woman can be considered a sacramental marriage. “However, one cannot say everything is black or white, all or nothing,” because “if there exists a homosexual union living faithfully for over thirty years, one cannot say that this is nothing.”

In this context, it is worth quoting the words of a cardinal outside Germany, but from a German-speaking region, the already mentioned Cardinal Christoph Schonborn, the Archbishop of Vienna. On the subject of so-called same-sex unions, he is on the side of the German cardinals in attempting to bring about a “change in the paradigm.” The method which is used by Schonborn in order to “tame” Catholic opinion is confusingly similar to that being used by the German cardinals: “Yes, but...”

In 2012, Cardinal Schonborn stated that “the path of conversion and penance is necessary for those who live in homosexual unions. We should help them to see that their union is not in accordance with God’s plan. We cannot change this plan, but we can remember that God is infinitely merciful.”

These words were spoken shortly after the Archbishop of Vienna broke the opposition of a Viennese pastor who did not agree to the presence of a homosexual in the parish council. Cardinal Schonborn recommended to the pastor that he should accept a homosexual into the circle of his closes associates, commenting that the composition of the incriminatory parish council “reflects the vitality of the Church. In their diversity, they reflect the diverse attitudes towards life and faith.”

In May 2014, the Viennese Cardinal congratulated the “woman with a beard” (Conchita Wurst), who won the politically correct Eurovision con-

test, in the following words: “As we know, in God’s garden there are many colors. Not everyone who was born a man considers himself to be a man and the same goes for women. These people deserve the same respect that it is due to all of us as human beings.” The Cardinal also used the occasion to observe that “sexual minorities are constantly treated with intolerance.”

In turn, in November 2014 during an interview with the Italian daily “Corriere Della Sera,” the same cardinal shared the news that he knows a homosexual pair in Vienna that lives “in fidelity.” He discussed his emotions at seeing their behavior when one of them was sick: “It was magnificent, in a human and in a Christian way, to see how one cared for the other. Such things should be recognized,” the Cardinal concluded.

THE JUBILEE OF THE REFORMATION: CELEBRATE, NOT SIMPLY COMMEMORATE

The announced by Cardinal Kasper “new phase of reception of the Council” also refers to a new dynamism and a so-called ecumenical dialogue. In 2017, 500 years will have passed since the Reformation began. This occasion has given rise to many statements by the German bishops clearly indicating that the German bishops not only plan to commemorate (gedenken), but also “celebrate” (feiern) this event along with the German Evangelicals. On October 31, 2014, the Archbishop of Cologne, Cardinal Woelke, took part in the Evangelical celebrations connected with the “Reformation Day.” On this occasion, he said that “reformation, understood as a conversion of the Church to Christ, can also be celebrated by Catholics.”

In 2003, the Archbishop of Munich, Cardinal Marx, suspended a priest for taking part in a protestant “Lord’s Supper.” In an interview given in 2013 for “Die Zeit,” the Archbishop said: “I uphold that decision, but with age I have become more searching. It might be the case that today I would have

said [to the suspended priest]: Come, let us discuss this, maybe we can reach something together.”¹²

In 2015, the Cardinal from Munich concluded that “after 50 years of a common ecumenical dialogue, it is possible for Catholics to read Luther’s texts and learn from them” and the upcoming anniversary of the Reformation “will challenge the Church to place Christ even more at the center of attention.”¹³

The compendium of the “change in the paradigm” of the German Catholic Church in its view of the Reformation and the rationale for its commemoration and celebration is the Catholic-Evangelical communique of 2013, entitled “From conflict to community.” Among other things, one can read the following statement “in light of the renewal of Catholic theology, which became apparent during the Second Vatican Council, today Catholics can appreciate Martin Luther’s desire to reform and may view it with greater openness than before. This implicit rapprochement with Luther’s intentions has led to a new assessment of his Catholicity. This happened within the context of acknowledging that his goal was the reformation, not the division of the Church.”¹⁴

Anyway, the ecumenical sensitivity of the German cardinals goes well beyond the question of celebrating the anniversary of the Reformation, which signified the falling away from the Universal Church for about half of Germany. The German bishops, *comme il faut*, are against “Islamophobia” and courageously come out on behalf of a “dialogue with Islam.” Towards the end of December 2014, certainly with the approval and knowledge of

¹² “Wir herrschen nich!” Interview with Cardinal Marx in “Die Zeit” from 21/09/2013. www.zeit.de/2013/38/kardinal-reinhard-marx-berater-papst [accessed on 15/01/2015].

¹³ “Kardynał Marx będzie świętował rocznicę reformacji.” www.pch24.pl [accessed on 5/02/2015]

¹⁴ Cf. Vom Konflikt zur Gemeinschaft. Gemeinsame Lutherische-Katholisches Reformationsgedenken im Jar 2017. Bericht der Lutherischen/Romisch-Katholischen Kommission für die Einheit, 2. Auflage, Leipzig/Paderborn 2013, p. 22-23.

his archbishop, the pastor of the cathedral in Cologne, Fr. Norbert Feldhoof, ordered the night lighting of the magnificent Gothic cathedral to be turned off to protest . . . the marches of “Pegida,” which opposes the progressing Islamization of the West.¹⁵

THE GOSPEL CRITERIA: WHAT IS LEFT OF THE CHURCH IN GERMANY?

But maybe all these fears and criticism of the German cardinals are unjust, unfounded? Perhaps their “via media,” between “rigorism” and “laxism” is the best way? Maybe the constantly referred to notion of “pastoral care” flows from the achievements (necessarily in cooperation with Divine Grace) in the field of pastoral work in their dioceses? After all, the Savior says: “By their fruits you shall know them.”

Maybe some statistics to begin with. In the last six decades, the number of practicing Catholics in Germany has fallen threefold. In turn, as reported in 2013 by the Bertelsman Foundation, there is a systematic rise in the number of people declaring themselves to be irreligious. In 2014, they constituted almost 40% of the German populace (in the Western lands, those of the “old GFR,” it was 70%, among which were traditionally Catholic lands of southern Germany and historically Catholic Rhineland).

In 2013, according to the official statistics, around 180.000 people left the Catholic Church, about 30% more than in the previous year. Out of 24 million German Catholics, only 11% regularly attend a Sunday Mass (in 1989, it was twice that number). On the other hand, 70% of those declaring to be Catholics do not believe in the Resurrection of Christ. The total of 60% do not believe in the eternal life, however one out of four Germans believes that encountering a black cat is a sure sign of trouble. At the dawn of the 21

¹⁵ German cathedral to dim lights in protest against anti-Islamic march, www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2015/01/03 [accessed on 20/01/2015]

century, more people believe in UFOs than in the Last Judgment. Already in Germany there are more fortune tellers and diviners than Catholic priests.

Devastating results were brought to light after a poll conducted among German Catholics in 2014 by the Allensbach Institute (one of the most renowned institutions of this type in Germany) on behalf of the German Bishops Conference. The question of why they are Catholic, 68% of the respondents answered: "Because one can celebrate important events in a church, such as a baptism or a funeral." The second most widely indicated reply was: "It is obvious to us, it is in our family tradition."

There is an exponential rise in the number of closed and then de-sacralized Catholic churches; this process intensified in the year 2000. From 1990 to 2006, according to the statistics of the German episcopate, over 300 churches were closed in all of Germany. Some forecast that this number will reach 1.000 in the next couple of years.

According to the data published by the German Bishops Conference, there is a systematic drop in the number of baptisms and marriages. In 2013, 165.000 baptisms were administered (3.000 less than in 2012), 44.000 Catholic marriages were contracted (also a drop by 3.000 compared to 2012). In 1990 alone, there were 116.000 Catholic marriages contracted.

Thus the real pastoral problem is not Holy Communion for the divorced, but a falling interest of Germans in marriage as such, even in civil marriage. As we can see, the de facto break since 1993 with the traditional Catholic doctrine on the prohibition of Holy Communion for the divorced on the part of the German Church has not- brought anything into the sphere of "pastoral care."

The essence of the problem does not lie in the "merciful approach to the problems of a contemporary man," but in faith (or lack thereof). Primarily in the faith of those who are tasked with leading the Church in Germany. Should the Church teaching on Our Lord's Resurrection or the Last

Judgment “conform” to “the needs of a contemporary man,” simply because a majority of Germans do not believe in these revealed Truths of Faith?

The rapid disappearance of the Catholic Church in Germany, understood as a community of believers in Christ, has not escaped the attention of the mainstream media. Typically this process is seen as a “normal sign of progress.” Not everyone, however, interprets it as such. Worth quoting is an analysis made towards the end of 2014 by Markus Gunther, a commentator for “FAZ.”

In his article entitled eloquently “Diaspora Germany” published on December 29, 2014, he observed that “to the vast majority in and outside the Church the question of God is one with which they struggle during their whole life.” There arises, however, a crucial question, “why do those seeking no longer see any signs of direction? Why does the offer not meet the demand? The most popular answer to this question is: because the Church is not with the times. It would have to adjust more to the conditions of a contemporary man. On the face of it, this sounds very nice, but after a closer look, it is total nonsense. The German Evangelical Church in Germany has basically done that which is being demanded of the Catholic Church in order to finally be with the times: women ordinations, doing away with celibacy, liberalization of morality, full acceptance of homosexuals and the divorced. If these were truly the reasons for the ills of Christianity, then Protestants should be much better off than Catholics. But this is not the case. A second intellectual error accompanies this spell of ‘with the times’: Where the Church is not based on timeless, inviolable truths, she changes into a purely human institution. Political programs have to go with the times, just like entertainment. Religion has to assign itself absolute truths or it is no religion at all. Meanwhile both Churches [Catholic and Evangelical] in Germany, not always officially, but in fact in a practical life, have abandoned truths central to the faith. Attempting not to criticize anyone and widening the accessibility of faith, many issues have been watered down: Jesus as ‘Son of God’

has been transformed into a model human being along the lines of Buddha and Gandhi. The Resurrection has been transformed into a legend, which is not to be literally understood, but rather in the sense of ‘the one who lives in the hearts of people who loved him is not dead.’ The lowest common denominator of such a proclamation is a ‘feel good’ prose, which should reach the greatest number of people and thus become popular. Peace in the world, more justice for everyone, less egoism in one’s actions – these issues any grouping of decent people can agree on. There is not much distinction here between some appeal by UNESCO or Greenpeace. God is unnecessary here.”

The commentator goes on to point out the significance of the “fatal development of modern theology” in the “assault on traditional notions in people’s minds.” What was this fatal development of German modern theology based on? The author answers that “on a desire to cut-off the content from the image, to change faith into something abstract and trusting in a contemporary man to better cope with the notion rather than the picture. Wrong. Faith without images is ideology and ideology is determined by the intellect and fashion. The image remains an image, it is a challenge, it fascinates, irritates, it is accepted or rejected, but it maintains itself. The one who destroys the image ensures that not much is left of the notions. If someone does not accept God as a Person, but rather as an abstract being, as energy or power, he will lose the faith.”

WHAT IS THE GERMAN CHURCH RICH WITH?

It is often noted, also by the German bishops, that the large amount of people leaving the Catholic Church (and Evangelical) is a result of the present in recent times exacerbation of the provisions in the collection by the States of the so-called church tax (Kirchensteuer), which is then redistributed to different churches. Depending on a land, the tax rate is 8-9% of

the value of the income tax and its payment is mandatory for all Catholics (or Evangelicals). That is unless they declare on paper that they have left the Church. Then one can save up to €560 a year.

The situation is thus such: the drop in the number of declared Catholics means a drop in the Church income. Despite this, taking into consideration the general prosperity of our western neighbors, the income of the German Catholic Church is stunning. In 2013, the state revenue office paid the Church a fee of almost €5.5 billion on account of the church tax. The archdiocese of Cologne alone in 2013 had an income larger than that of the Vatican.

In all lands (with the exception of Hamburg and Bremen), the clergy receive official salaries. The pay of a bishop is about €8.000 a month. An archbishop receives €12.000 a month. Today, the Catholic Church is the second largest employer (after the state) in Germany (charitable organizations, schools, etc.).

“The Church of the poor for the poor” – this is, as we hear, the program of the current Pope. Is the problem of the material wealth of the German Church a subject of discussion between the Bishop of Rome and his trusted advisors, Cardinals Kasper and Marx, we do not know that. Has a certain impropriety been indicated to the German bishops (to put it mildly), i.e. a situation whereby according to the guidelines laid out in September 2012 by the Bishops Conference, people who have officially declared (for reasons of tax savings) that they have left the Catholic Church cannot receive the sacraments, but at the same time these bishops want, motivated by the “pastoral care” and “mercy,” to dismantle on a global scale the Catholic doctrine on the indissolubility of marriage and allow for thousands of sacrilegious communions?

BENEDICT XVI TO THE GERMAN CHURCH: CUT YOURSELF OFF FROM THE WORLD!

This we do not know. We do know, however, how St. Pius X reacted when he was encouraged to tone down his opposition to the separation of Church and State instituted in the Third Republic in France for reasons having to do with the wealth of the French Church. The saintly pope replied then that “the good of the Church is more important than the goods of the Church.”

We know what Benedict XVI said during the apostolic visit to his homeland in 2011 on the necessity of “separation of the Church from the world” (sich entweltlichen). On September 25, 2011 during a meeting with Catholics engaged in the activities of the Church, the German pope stated: “In order to accomplish her mission, she will need again and again to set herself apart from her surroundings, to become in a certain sense ‘unworldly’. And he warned: “In the concrete history of the Church, however, a contrary tendency is also manifested, namely that the Church becomes self-satisfied, settles down in this world, becomes self-sufficient and adapts herself to the standards of the world. Not infrequently, she gives greater weight to organization and institutionalization than to her vocation to openness towards God, her vocation to opening up the world towards the other. In order to accomplish her true task adequately, the Church must constantly renew the effort to detach herself from her tendency towards worldliness and once again to become open towards God.”¹⁶

It is hard not to see in these words spoken by a German pope in Germany (and in Freiburg, the seat of one of the most “progressive” German dioceses) a reference to the problem of material wealth of the German Church. Benedict XVI knew perfectly well that in many cases the billions of

¹⁶ http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2011/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20110925_catholics-freiburg.html (accessed on 22/04/2015)

euros at the disposition of the German Church are used for worthy causes of the entire Church (such as missions, charitable work under Caritas), but without hesitation he added: “History has shown that, when the Church becomes less worldly, her missionary witness shines more brightly. Once liberated from material and political burdens and privileges, the Church can reach out more effectively and in a truly Christian way to the whole world, she can be truly open to the world.”¹⁷

BENEDICT XVI TO THE GERMAN CHURCH: EVIL IS NOT TRIFLE!

Benedict XVI ended his speech with an appeal, considering the situation of the German Church and its influence in the Vatican, an appeal that is dramatically timely that: “it is time once again to discover the right form of detachment from the world, to move resolutely away from the Church’s worldliness. (...) Openness to the concerns of the world means, then, for the Church that is detached from worldliness, bearing witness to the primacy of God’s love.”¹⁸

Equally eloquent were the words of the pope spoken in Erfurt on September 23, 2011 during a meeting with the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany: “Most people today, even Christians, set out from the presupposition that God is not fundamentally interested in our sins and virtues. He knows that we are all mere flesh. And insofar as people believe in an afterlife and a divine judgment at all, nearly everyone presumes for all practical purposes that God is bound to be magnanimous and that ultimately he mercifully overlooks our small failings. The question no longer troubles us. But are they really so small, our failings? (...) No, evil is no small matter. Were we truly to place God at the centre of our lives, it could not be so powerful.”¹⁹

¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁹ <http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2011/september/>

It is hard not to see in these words a clear reference to the “argument of mercy,” which is utilized today by radical progressives in their attempt to push through “the change in the paradigm” in the Church.

ST. JOHN PAUL II TO THE CHURCH IN GERMANY: AGAINST FALSE MERCY

The suicidal tendencies of the German Church, which this text deals with, were not born yesterday. During his three apostolic trips to the Federal Republic of Germany (1980, 1987, 1996), St. John Paul II on numerous occasions made references to the problems and errors which were already burdening the German ecclesial community. The papal diagnosis from the perspective of several years impresses one with its prophetic indications and advice. Such as the warning addressed on November 17, 1980 to the German bishops in Fulda: “Many would like to take part in the life of the Church but they do not see a connection between the world they live in and principles of a Christian life. It is believed that only due to her stringency, the Church endures in her norms and that She is opposed to mercy which Jesus demonstrated in the Gospel. The hard demands of Jesus, His words ‘Go, and now sin no more’ (John 8, 11). Many times in these issues the conscience is invoked, forgetting that conscience is the eye, which in and of itself does not possess the light, but has it only when it looks at the real Source of Light.”²⁰

Two days earlier (November 15, 1980), in his homily during a Mass in Cologne, John Paul II stated: “The state and society are in danger of decay when they cease to efficiently support and defend marriage and the family while treating in an equal fashion legally unregulated unions . (...) The

documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20110923_evangelical-church-erfurt.html (accessed on 22/04/2015)

²⁰ Speech of John Paul II to the German Episcopal Conference of the FRG in the seminary in Fulda, 17 November 1980, in: Jan Paweł II w kraju reformacji. Homilie i przemówienia wygłoszone podczas podróży do RFN w dniach 15-19 listopada 1980 roku, ed. A. Podsiad, Warsaw 1984, p. 160-161.

full carnal union between a husband and a wife finds its rightful place only within the confines of an exclusive and definitive faithful union of persons accomplished in marriage. The definitive character of marital fidelity, which many today do not understand, is at the same time an expression of the inalienable dignity of man.”²¹

ST. JOHN PAUL II TO THE CHURCH IN GERMANY: THE NEED TO PROCLAIM “CHRIST’S MESSAGE WITHOUT ABRIDGMENT”

During all three visits to Germany, St. John Paul II returned to the necessity of proclaiming the unequivocal message of faith by the German Church. In 1980, he said to the German bishops gathered in Fulda: “Believers and non-believers have the right to hear the unequivocal and authentic preaching of the Church.”²²

Seven years later in Cologne (April 30, 1987) during a meeting with the German Episcopate, the pope returned to this subject, stating: “The more fundamental values and moral attitudes are contested in the contemporary state and society, the more powerful and bold the non-abridged preaching of the message of Christ to people, above all Christians, and constant reminding them that the highest norm of ethical conduct is the will of God must be.”²³

During a Mass in Paderborn in 1996 (June 22), John Paul II stated: “I ask then, especially you, bishops and priests, to help all of God’s People continually encounter the Lord, to listen to His words and follow His example. You, priests and bishops, be especially the servants of unity of the People of God who must be one in the faith and communal life with the Church of all time. I ask you with all my heart to dedicate yourselves to the service of unity.”²⁴

²¹ Ibidem, p. 34.

²² Ibidem, p. 159.

²³ “Osservatore Romano,” no. 7, 1987, p. 20.

²⁴ “Osservatore Romano,” no. 9, 1996, p. 10.

On June 23, 1996 during the Mass celebrated at the Olympic Stadium and during the beatification of German priests, martyrs of the Nazi era, John Paul II reminded that “the criteria of an authentic following of Christ is not the applause of the world, but the faithful witness to Jesus Christ. The Lord does not demand of His followers a compromise with the world, but a profession of faith which is ready to make sacrifice.”²⁵

Did not the saintly pope refer in this way to the strong presence of the “new aggiornamento” idea in the German Church? In a way anticipating the coming of the “new phase in the reception of the Council,” St. John Paul II pointed in 1987 to the aridity of purely human programs for the Church “renewal.” In the homily he gave in Essen on May 2, 1987, he stated: “And the Church? In recent years, there was much deliberation about the renewal of religious life and more has been done in this area than before and yet the the churches are becoming increasingly deserted, religious life and Christian witness are weakening.”²⁶

**ST. JOHN PAUL II TO THE CHURCH IN GERMANY: YOU PLACE
SECONDARY ISSUES AT THE CENTER BUT THE “INTERIOR CENTER”
IS DISAPPEARING**

Of course, papal teaching refers to the entire Church, but the place (Germany) where these words were spoken give them a special reference, primarily to the German context. Such was the case when on June 22, 1996 in Paderborn, he addressed the German Bishops Conference: “The need for re-thinking one’s life and purification, which the Second Vatican Council spoke of, was unfortunately manifested by many members of the Church in the form of a destructive criticism of the institution and growing dissatisfaction, which deepens the exuberant subjectivism of postmodernist culture.

²⁵ Ibidem, p. 22.

²⁶ “Osservatore Romano,” no. 7, 1987, p. 30.

(...) Attention of the faithful must necessarily be drawn to the central point of revealed truth: to Christ and the life in Christ. One cannot expect that people will become delighted with the Church and find the joy of faith in Her if secondary issues are placed at the center of public attention, especially when this is accompanied by seemingly objective and factual reasoning and when they are utilized instrumentally.”²⁷

Seven years earlier in Augsburg (May 3, 1987), John Paul II stated in his homily: “Many people have lost the deeper meaning of their day-to-day doings; our society lacks in great measure the internal center.”²⁸

How to regain it? Only through strong faith, uncompromising faith, also in the public sphere. On May 1, 1987 during Vespers celebrated in front of the cathedral in Munster, he addressed German Catholics: “Without strong faith you are deprived of a foundation, relying on currently changing doctrines. Undoubtedly, today there are groups in which the right doctrine is not accepted, where, as they see, fit new masters are constantly sought out, flattering the ears, as St. Paul predicted long ago. Do not let yourselves be fooled. Do not allow yourselves to be deceived by the prophets of egoism, falsely conceived self-realization, theories of temporal salvation, who want to build a world without God.”²⁹

Two days later in Munich (May 3, 1987), the pope cried out: “ I call upon all of you: defend the Divine Laws and Divine Reverence also in a public life. Do not let dechristianization continue to spread.”³⁰

²⁷ “Osservatore Romano,” no. 9, 1996, p. 19.

²⁸ “Osservatore Romano,” no. 8, 1987, p. 20.

²⁹ “Osservatore Romano,” no. 7, 1987, p. 24.

³⁰ “Osservatore Romano,” no. 8, 1987, p. 20.

ST. JOHN PAUL II TO THE CHURCH IN GERMANY: DO NOT OBSCURE THE REAL NATURE OF THE GOSPEL, DO NOT MAKE WEAKNESS “THE FIRST PRINCIPLE OF EVERYTHING.”

Nine years later, this call directed at the German Catholics was repeated by the pope in Berlin (Beatification Mass, June 23, 1996): “Remain faithful to the truth which is Christ. Courageously raise your voice, when you see that erroneous principles again lead to erroneous actions, when human dignity is offended or when the divinely ordained moral order is called into question.”³¹

Without strong faith (or one that is lacking in any kinds of “fashionable” philosophical accretions) German Catholics cannot influence the whole society. Large sums of money for charitable organizations or missionary activity will be of no help provided the faith in Germany will be fragile, insipid and lukewarm: “Only then, when their foundations will be strong, Christians will be able to meet the obligations in the sphere of cultural, social, political, and economic life. Therefore, one must avoid the propagation of values which, despite being attractive to many, can obscure the real nature of the Gospel. The truths of faith must be preached calmly and thoughtfully ‘in season and out of season.’”³²

In 1980, the German Church heard from the Successor of St. Peter an equally urgent call not to allow for a falsification of the Gospel in the spirit of “something for everybody.” As John Paul II indicated in Fulda on June 18, 1980: “The Gospel is not always pleasing to people. And it cannot always be pleasing. It cannot be falsified to ‘please people,’ it is also forbidden to seek some personal benefit in it or ‘idle fame.’ To the listeners, it might sometimes seem to be a ‘hard saying’ and the one who proclaims it and confesses it can become a ‘sign of contradiction.’ Because this Divine Truth, this Good News, indeed contains within it a great internal tension. In it, the

³¹ “Osservatore Romano,” no. 9, 1996, p. 23.

³² Ibidem, p. 18.

contrast between what is of God and what is of the world becomes clear. (...) In the very heart of the Gospel, the Good News, there is etched a cross. Two large currents intersect in it: one flowing from God to the world, to the people of the world, the current of love and truth, and the other, which flows through the world, 'the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life' (I John, 2:16). The latter do not come 'from the Father.'³³

Thus, as John Paul II taught in Germany, one cannot separate the Gospel from heroism, the heroism of the Cross. The Vicar of Christ demanded this heroism especially of the priests, and that is why he addressed them in the following words in 1980: "I beseech you, dear priest Brothers and Friends, to follow this path which the Church has taken faithful to her ancient tradition and to guard this path from all false subjectivism. (...) so often today many advocates of a different vision of the ministerial priesthood than the one developed in the Church and which is guarded primarily in the western tradition, seem to treat this weakness as the first principle of everything and announce it as a human right. Meanwhile Christ has taught us that a man has a right first of all to his greatness, has a right to that which is greater than him. In this, above all, his dignity is special dignity. And it is in this that the great power of grace is revealed."³⁴

ST. JOHN PAUL II TO THE CHURCH IN GERMANY: THEOLOGY MUST BE "SUPPORTED ON THE SHOULDERS OF THE FATHERS IN FAITH"

Healthy, formidable faith will not rise in a Church in which theology is falsified. Addressing German theologians in Altotting in 1980, John Paul II reminded them that the overriding goal of theology is to direct one's own research efforts (as a discipline of science) towards God in Three Persons,

³³ Homily of John Paul II during a Mass in front of the cathedral in Fulda, 18 June 1980. Jan Paweł II w kraju reformacji, op.cit., p. 195-196.

³⁴ Ibidem, p. 149.

and through this to contribute to the fight against the spread of secularism: “Since traces of God in the secularized world are largely obliterated, the most urgent task of the theologian is to concentrate on the Triune God Who is the source and enduring foundation of our life and the world. All efforts of theological knowledge must in the end lead to God Himself. During the Second Vatican Council it was believed that a positive answer to the problem of God could be formulated. Meanwhile it turned out that precisely the reference of a man to God is fragile and needs to be strengthened. I want to ask you to work with all your strength towards the renewal of the understanding of God, with special emphasis given to the truth of the Trinity and creation.”³⁵

Theology also has to strengthen “the little ones” in faith. It must strengthen, not scandalize. In order for this goal to be achieved, theology has to be conducted, as the pope emphasized, in accordance with the pure transmission of the Gospel and in accordance with the Tradition: “All theology is based on Holy Writ. Ground the entire theological message on Scripture and continually refer to it. Remain faithful to the twofold aim of all exegesis: keep intact the unmatched Gospel of God, which does not originate from men and have also the courage to present it to the world anew, in all of its purity. (...) The bridge between Holy Writ and our present concerns does not arise for the Catholic theologian without the mediation of tradition. Tradition does not substitute the biblical Word of God, but rather is a witness to it throughout the ages, always explaining it anew. Remain in a dialogue with the living tradition of the Church. Learn the undiscovered treasures from it. Bring forth to the people in the Church that these are not relics of the past, but that it contains our great heritage from the Apostolic times to today and at the same time a great potential, which can solve today’s problems. (...) Theology also assumes faith. Theology can explain it and develop it, but not create it. The theologian also supports himself on the

³⁵ Ibidem, p. 216.

shoulders of his fathers in the faith. (...) The believer has a right to what he can be base himself on in his faith. Theology must show a man where he can find the ultimate foundation. That is why the Church received the gift of the Spirit of Truth.”³⁶

ST. JOHN PAUL II TO THE CHURCH IN GERMANY: FIRST “RIGHTS OF GOD,” THEN “HUMAN RIGHTS”

On more than one occasion in this text I have emphasized that the sickness of the German Church stems from the prevalence of erroneous philosophical and theological concepts. One of them is raving (and crazy) anthropocentrism. It is the glass through which the real nature of the Gospel is falsified in the spirit of reducing the Good News to a guide on how to live an easy life.

St. John Paul II systematically reminded the German Catholics (lay and clergy) of the proper perspective. On May 3, 1987 in Munich he stated: “Today, we hear much about human rights. In many countries they are being violated. But one does not hear about the rights of God. But the rights of a man and the rights of God are interconnected. Where God and His law are not respected, there a man cannot make use of his rights either.”³⁷

Nine years earlier, during a speech given at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin (June 23, 1996), John Paul II elaborated on this subject: “Freedom does not mean the right to license. Freedom does not give unlimited privileges. One who understands it in this way exposes freedom to a fatal blow. The free man first and foremost has an obligation to truth, otherwise his freedom will not be more enduring than a beautiful dream, which ends with the awakening. A man does owe everything to himself, but is a creation of God; he is not the master of his life, as well as the lives of others; if he wants to be

³⁶ Ibidem, p. 217, 218.

³⁷ “Osservatore Romano,” no. 8, 1987, p. 20.

a man of truth, he must listen and be obedient. His free creative powers will only develop fully when he grounds himself in truth, which is given to every person as an unshakable foundation. Only then will he be able to fully realize himself and even surpass himself. There is no freedom without truth.”³⁸

“A man is called to freedom. All of you listening to me, I say: the fullness and perfection of this freedom has one name – Jesus Christ.” These were the last words spoken to Germans during his farewell at the Brandenburg Gate.

It is worthwhile to return to the words of St. John Paul II calling on the German Church to remain connected to the “Church of all times.” The “change in the paradigm” being pushed by the German Cardinals, especially in relation to the undermining of the indissolubility of marriage as a sacrament instituted by Christ, is an attempt to cut off from the triumphant Church in Heaven.

One must bear this in mind especially this year when the second part of the synodal discussions will be held and when we will celebrate the 480th anniversary of the death and the 80th anniversary of the canonization of St. Thomas Moore and Bishop John Fisher. In 1535, they were martyred because they refused to recognize the divorce, actually the “annulment of marriage” between King Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon. Today, their example might be labeled by some as “rigorism” and an unworthy of a Christian soul “lack of mercy.” But these are great saints of our Church, one of many who at that time in England (cf. the brutal death of the London Carthusians dismembered alive) paid with their own lives for their fidelity to the teaching of Christ and His Church of all times on the inviolable nature of marriage.

St. Thomas and St. John, pray for us, pray for the Pope and the bishops!

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³⁸ “Osservatore Romano,” no. 9, 1996, p. 30.



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